

Kentucky Bookmobiles and Outreach

The purpose of Bookmobile and Outreach Services is to ensure that all Kentucky citizens have access to public library materials and services. Kentucky is a national leader in providing bookmobile service and they remain an important means of providing library services throughout the state.

Rural, urban, and suburban Kentuckians alike have depended on this program from the days of the packhorse librarians over 100 years ago to the latest high-tech "cybermobiles" that offer wireless connection to the Internet.

Kentucky has:

- The largest bookmobile fleet in the nation.
- A proud tradition of providing library outreach service by book box and packhorse since 1887! Our first motorized bookmobile began service in 1933 and we have had statewide support of bookmobiles since 1948. This statewide support continues today.
- A continuing need for bookmobile and outreach services!

KDLA provides continuing education for Bookmobile and Outreach Librarians and the Regional Librarians may also provide meetings in the Regions to provide an opportunity for continuing education and an exchange of information with their counterparts in other counties in the Region.

KBOS is a monitored discussion list devoted to Kentucky's bookmobile and outreach services librarians. By using this listserv®, individuals from around the state will have the chance to share ideas, voice concerns, and make valuable contacts all through their e-mail.

To join the list, send email with the subject, "KBOS," to chris.bischoff@ky.gov. In the body of the message, list your name and the name of your library. You will be emailed instructions for posting to this moderated discussion list.

Bookmobiles can make a big impact on your community and library. For example, in Fiscal Year 2012-2013,

- Seventy-three bookmobiles were operating, providing patron service for 82,895 hours last year. Additionally, there were forty-eight outreach vehicles on the road last year.
- Circulation via bookmobiles totaled an astounding 1,749,151 items in the last fiscal year!
- For the most recent statistics, see the [Statistical Report of Kentucky Public Libraries](#).

Guidelines for Bookmobile Service

Under Kentucky Revised Statute [[KRS 171.125\(2\)](#)] all tax-supported public libraries are required to provide services to all residents in their service area (county or city).

In addition to a library facility and library branches, bookmobiles have traditionally provided this service to those who cannot visit the nearest library facility. Bookmobiles and outreach vehicles are the least expensive and most efficient way to reach those people who have difficulty getting to the library. Some of the reasons for this difficulty include:

- those isolated by distance or lack of resources;
- those with disabilities;
- the very young or elderly;
- those in institutions such as schools, nursing homes, correctional facilities, etc.

In addition to bookmobiles, extended services may also be provided by:

- home delivery;
- books by mail;
- trained volunteers.

Guidelines are established to ensure equity of service between in-library patrons and bookmobile patrons. While these guidelines are voluntary, they are an important consideration in providing comprehensive services to your community. Some guidelines to consider are:

- Your bookmobile should be considered as a branch library, not as an auxiliary service.
- Policies, procedures, and available services are comparable for all library customers.
 - The bookmobile and outreach program has a separate operating budget at a level designed to meet the library's goals and objectives for these services.
- A replacement fund for vehicles is part of the library budget. The replacement fund should be equal to no less than ten percent of the cost of a suitably-sized vehicle in the annual budget.
 - 10 years is a reasonable life span for a bookmobile. 15-20 years are possible, but the cost of maintenance increases and reliability diminishes over time.
- The Bookmobile has a designated budget line item for purchasing materials.
- On bookmobiles, reference materials meet the same standards as the central library.
 - A "ready reference" level of information service is provided with reference materials.
- Patrons should have full access through the bookmobile or outreach services to all circulating materials owned by the system or made available through interlibrary loan.
- If possible, two staff members are on the bookmobile during all service hours. If not, the bookmobile or outreach vehicle staff is provided with a mobile phone as a safety measure.
- The bookmobile schedule is easy to read, reflects the desired image of the library, and provides information about time and locations of stops in an attention-getting design.
 - It should display the library logo and information about the library system.
 - Provisions are made for informing customers when services are cancelled temporarily.

- Access to the Internet is provided.
- Equipment to allow downloading of digital materials is provided.
- Technology-assisted services are available, such as:
 - database searching;
 - e-readers and MP3 players.
- The bookmobile offers a quality of service comparable to a system branch. This guideline will be met if circulation, information service, programming, and target populations are given appropriate priority.
 - Target audiences may include:
 - ♦ preschool or daycare centers;
 - ♦ people with disabilities;
 - ♦ senior centers and nursing or assisted-care facilities;
 - ♦ communities of underserved populations;
 - ♦ schools.
- All library collections, including books, audiovisual materials software, realia, and other items are available to bookmobile patrons on the same or a comparable basis as to all other customers.
- Circulation rules and procedures are comparable for all library customers.
- Statistics are maintained which are comparable to those kept at the main facility.
 - Additional record-keeping will be required to track hours of service and hours on the road as required by the KDLA Annual Report.
 - Bookmobile customer requests and reserves are given the same priority as other requests and reserves.
 - The bookmobile is clean, painted an eye-catching color, and displays the system logo or other design which focuses attention on the bookmobile and library.
- The vehicle has a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system adequate to maintain a comfortable temperature in summer and winter, even when doors are constantly in use.
- There is a vehicle maintenance procedure. In addition to adhering to manufacturer-recommended and warranty maintenance, the bookmobile staff will check:
 - Daily: brakes, tires, lights, horn, windshield wipers and fluids;
 - Periodically: Manufacturer periodic maintenance as outlined in the vehicle documentation.
- A back up delivery system is planned to prevent service interruptions when the bookmobile is temporarily out of service for maintenance or repair.

Typically:

- The cost of a bookmobile is far less than that of a branch.
- The cost per circulation is far less than that of the main library.
- The cost of a bookmobile is less than the cost of a books-by-mail program.

Also typically:

- Bookmobiles are not considered by library staff as “serious” library service.
- Bookmobiles are ignored in planning.

- Bookmobiles are underfunded and understaffed.

Although some of the information may be dated, you can find suggested guidelines and vehicle requirements in the KDLA 2005 *Bookmobile Operations and Support Manual*.

If you have questions about the Kentucky Bookmobile Program or questions concerning bookmobile maintenance, call Chris Bischoff at (502)564-8300, ext. 213 or by e-mail at chris.bischoff@ky.gov.